

LOCAL PROMISING IDEAS AND PRACTICES

Improve client evaluation, assessment, and referral process

Up-Front Assessment: In an effort to try and increase engagement with our WF parents, we are preparing to pilot a new approach to WF service delivery that would include an up-front "assessment" process prior to entering Job Search or any other work readiness activity. This new model is expected to result in larger numbers of clients being aware of their options and choices and participating at a higher level of commitment. The expected outcome is more clients achieving self-sufficiency more quickly. Current clients may be referred to the evaluation process based on case manager discretion and/or client choice. Clients who are referred to the social worker for assessment will be referred to the evaluation process when ready to pursue self-sufficiency. The partnership is developing a new model for serving the Pregnancy to Employment clients. We anticipate starting this pilot in March of this year.

The following is our pilot plan:

1. If an applicant is eligible, does not have a viable plan for temporary assistance (diversion) or chooses not to use it, then they will be referred to the case manager for screening and the initial IRP to complete the evaluation process. When we have the information from the evaluation, we will be able to create, with the client, a complete IRP, which the client supports and is committed too. This will be job search, training, treatment or a combination of those.
2. If the client fails to participate, we will work with them very intensively to re-engage. We will point out that if the client doesn't participate at a full grant level, they will have to cure the sanction at a partial grant level or slide into a no grant sanction and still have to cure the sanction for four weeks, before having the grant restored. It will be to their benefit, if they wish to receive the grant, to participate at the full grant level.

We fully expect clients to have better IRP's with more buy-in and less sanctions. We had a special LPA meeting on 1/3/06 to pull together a plan to pilot the new processes. One idea we have is to combine the CASAS and Work Skills piece into one session for the client (projected to take about 3 hours) and make this available at a specific time each day so clients can plan to complete the evaluation process. This approach would minimize costs while maximizing the opportunity for clients to get their evaluations done timely. Everyone in our LPA is engaged and enthusiastic about the proposed changes to the WorkFirst Program and our opportunity to pilot a new process.

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1. Applicants will be interviewed by CSO staff to determine program eligibility. If eligible, clients will be offered temporary assistance (Diversion). If client does not opt for temporary assistance or is not a viable candidate for it, then the client will be referred to their case manager for screening and initial IRP.
2. Clients with significant physical, mental or domestic violence issues will be referred to a social worker for assessment and IRP.
3. All other clients will receive an initial IRP to complete the evaluation process. At this time transportation and childcare issues may be addressed as necessary.
4. The evaluation process will be located at WorkSource and will consist of three elements:
 - a) An introduction, which will include all the entire menu of options for client participation: training, job search, work and education, and Community Jobs. Clients will complete a form identifying the program or programs they are most interested in pursuing.
 - b) CASAS
 - c) Choices
5. Clients who are referred to the evaluation process will be given adequate time to complete the process. We will use an adult to adult approach, meaning clients will complete the evaluation process on a first come first serve basis. Clients who don't complete the evaluation process will receive a good cause notice to either complete the process or give a reason for not doing so, or they will be sanctioned.
6. Upon completion of the evaluation, the information will be used to inform the development of the IRP. The case manager will take into consideration the client's choices, the learning level and job skills and experience to craft an IRP to which the client is committed and to which all partners are supportive. At this time it will be emphasized to the client that participation is required and to work with the case manager and other partners to avoid sanction. Some clients who do not fit well in the standard programs may be referred for contractor services.
7. Once referred to a program, the receiving agency will work with the client to make sure the plan is a good one (relying on the client's choices and results of the evaluation) and make adjustments as necessary.

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